

DATE: November 7, 2022

TO: Mayor and City Council

CC: Eric Holmes, City Manager

FROM: Emily Benoit, Senior Transportation Planner, Community Development; Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director, Community Development

RE: **Complete Streets – SE 34th Street Safety and Mobility Project**

I. Background

The SE 34th Street Safety and Mobility Project has evaluated potential changes to improve safety and mobility in this corridor, between SE 162nd and SE 192nd Avenues. The project is recommending repurposing a travel lane in each direction to add dedicated space for people walking, biking, and using mobility-devices, and other safety improvements for all users, including drivers.

In addition to the Complete Streets policy goals, several corridor specific goals were identified for the SE 34th Street project and were used to align potential changes to the corridor with desired outcomes. The specific goals for the project are:

1. Improve comfort and mobility for all users, regardless of how they choose to travel
2. Prioritize safety for all users
3. Make improvements quickly and efficiently

II. Technical Findings

To understand how repurposing a travel lane would change conditions for people driving on SE 34th Street, a traffic analysis was completed for existing (2022), mid-term (2027), and long-term (2040) scenarios. The traffic operations analysis uses traffic counts collected in January 2022 and results are for the AM and PM peaks hours.

Traffic analysis findings indicate that under the existing and mid-term scenarios, the project goals can be achieved without substantially increasing travel time or delay experienced by people driving. Under the long-term scenario, increases in travel time and delay will be experienced by people driving with or without the repurposing of a travel lane.

Like all models, there are limitations to the extent that the traffic analysis can predict all future conditions, as the model, created with SW RTC traffic data, is only for the most traveled times of day in the AM and

PM peak hours and only includes vehicle travel. It does not account for small mobility devices, bicyclists, pedestrians, mode shift or travel time shifts that could result from design changes.

The average daily travel (ADT) on SE 34th Street is about 10,000 vehicles per day (2022), which is low for a corridor of this length and width. For perspective, the ADT of SE 164th Avenue is about 30,000 trips (2021), Fourth Plain Blvd, west of I-5, is about 15,000 trips (2021), and SE 192nd Avenue is about 22,000 trips (2018).

Intersections of Concern

Through the engagement process, the public expressed the most concern with potential changes to the intersections on SE 34th Street at SE 164th Avenue and SE 192nd Avenue. The traffic analysis shows the existing (2022), medium term (2027) and long term (2040) scenario timeframes for the peak hours of 7:45-8:45am and 4:00-5:00pm, the times of day where there is the most traffic. Level of service (LOS) is determined by assigning a letter grade, from A (the best) to F (the worst), based on the level of delay experienced by drivers at the intersection in accordance with [VMC 11.70](#) (Transportation Concurrency). These two intersections will operate at LOS D or better, which is an acceptable level of traffic delay per City policy and meets our concurrency standards. The exception to this is the 2040 build alternative in the PM peak hour, which under the current modeling assumptions and our existing concurrency standards would have a failing level of service in 2040. Again, the model does not account for new transportation technology or behavior changes such as different trip choices or altering travel times, so it is only one input in analyzing future condition and is less reliable the farther in the future we look.

The traffic analysis also evaluated the LOS for specific turning movements of concern from SE 34th Street westbound to SE 164th Avenue southbound and SE 192nd Avenue northbound to SE 34th Street westbound. These turning movements received LOS D or better, except the 2040 build alternative in the PM peak hour.

In summary, these intersections and turning movements of concern will operate with better LOS during the non-peak hours with no intersections or turning movements at failing conditions (LOS F) in the existing or medium term.

In the long term, the City has the opportunity to monitor and evaluate these intersections and turning movements as new transportation technologies and behaviors emerge in how people move around as well as with the new development expected along the corridor. If needed, the City can initiate new capital projects to address these issues over the long term. In the short term, the proposed design advances safety for all users in alignment with the Complete Streets policy, without allowing traffic delays to exceed acceptable levels.

Impact of Findings for Design

Technical findings also indicate that the proposed design can achieve the project goals by:

- Creating a new east-west mobility corridor
- Improving access to transit for people biking
- Not substantially adding to driver delays in the near-term and mid-term
- Slowing down vehicles to improve safety for all users
- Reducing the number of lanes people walking and biking must navigate at intersections
- Enhancing existing crossings to better connect key destinations
- Requiring no large capital investments in the near- to mid-term

- Including enhancements that could occur with pavement work
- Leveraging grant funding for additional safety improvements

With anticipated increases to vehicle travel in the future, long-term improvements outside the scope of this project may be needed to accommodate the intersections of SE 164th and SE 192nd Avenues to maintain continued safety and minimize delay. (See Attachment A for the full analysis).

III. Community Engagement

The Project had two touchpoints with the community. The first, completed in June 2022, included an online open house to share project information with the community and ask community members to share how they use SE 34th Street, what their barriers are and any concerns about the project. More than 500 community members completed the online survey. They identified safety, drive time impacts on the corridor and impacts to neighborhood character as key concerns about repurposing a lane. Community members also shared concerns about people driving too fast on the corridor today, how close the sidewalks are to the vehicle lanes, and the increase in traffic volume from planned growth in the area surrounding the corridor.

The second touchpoint with the community began in September 2022 and concluded in mid-October 2022. This included an online open house to share the proposed design and an online survey where community members could provide feedback on the proposed design. The second touchpoint also included two listening sessions, one with community members and one with key organizations and businesses along the corridor.

The community listening session was attended by approximately 20 community members who were invited to participate through their neighborhood associations. Primary concerns shared by community members during the listening session included concern for the impacts to travel time along the corridor resulting from repurposing a travel lane, the addition of modular bus platform at the bus stops and the ability of the proposed design to accommodate the increase in traffic resulting from planned growth along the corridor.

The second set of listening sessions were attended by administrative staff from Fisher's Landing Elementary School, located on SE 34th Street, and the developers of the Vancouver Innovation Center (VIC). School staff expressed support for the proposed design, including creating space for students who may choose to bike to school and increased separation between children walking to school and vehicle travel lanes. Members of the VIC project team also shared support for the project, including the ability to connect planned bicycle and pedestrian paths in their development to the roadway network and increasing the ability for people to walk, bike, use a mobility device or take transit to the site.

Approximately 230 community members completed the online survey as part of the second online open house. Of those respondents, 30 percent said they think the proposed design would be beneficial, five percent said they need to see it in action, and 65 percent said they have concerns. Community members who are concerned about the proposed design cited concerns about the increase in congestion resulting from planned development in the area, the lack of people that walk or bike on the corridor today, and capacity at the SE 164th and SE 192nd Avenue intersections. Community members who support the proposed design listed the ability to reduce vehicle speeds, opportunities to enhance safety at crossings, and the increased separation between people walking, biking, and using mobility devices and vehicles as items that would address existing challenges to traveling safely and comfortably on SE 34th Street.

Community members were also asked how their travel behavior would change with the proposed design in place. Nearly 20 percent of respondents said that they would walk, bike, or use transit more and five percent said they would drive less.

In response to community input, staff conducted another review of the proposed design for the intersections of SE 34th Street and 164th Ave. and 192nd Ave., to explore all potential design solutions that could provide space to retain the dual left turn lanes WB to SB at SE 34th and 164th, and NB to WB at 192nd and SE 34th. Unfortunately, this exercise confirmed that there is not way to maintain the dual lefts while also meeting best practice for the design of safe mobility lanes at these large, challenging intersections. However, staff have identified the potential for a future capital project to improve the intersections in the future if needed to facilitate broad mobility as the area continues to develop. This capital project falls outside the scope of the current Safety and Mobility and Pavement work, but it does provide an option for the City and private development to address future infrastructure needs if and when this is needed.

IV. Transportation and Mobility Commission and City Council

In 2022 the project team presented to the TMC four times (February, April, July, and October) to discuss the project goals, traffic analysis and findings, community engagement process and input, and proposed design elements. On October 4, the TMC voted 5-2 in favor of a design recommendation for the corridor including the repurposed lane and new safety elements (see [meeting notes](#)).

On August 15, 2022 the project team held a workshop with City Council to share about the project, traffic analysis, and community engagement. And on September 25, 2022 City Council passed a resolution to proceed with a proposed design to repurpose a travel lane in each direction on SE 34th Street to meet project goals.

V. Proposed Design

Based on the technical findings and the community input summarized above, the project team has developed a design that will achieve the project goals of enhancing safety and mobility for all users while minimizing the increase in delay experienced by drivers where possible. The proposed design would provide one vehicle travel lane and a mobility lane with a buffer separating the two lanes. To enhance safety and access to transit, additional design features include:

- Installing a vertical barrier to provide physical separation between the mobility lanes and vehicle lanes.
- Installing high-visibility crosswalks to make pedestrians more visible and drivers more likely to stop for pedestrians.
- Constructing a HAWK Beacon at SE 162nd Avenue to allow people to cross safely.
- Installing modular bus platforms to maintain ADA access to buses and minimize potential conflicts between buses and people traveling in the mobility lanes.

VI. Recommendation

Based on the analysis findings, community engagement input, and City Council direction, and in accordance project goals to improve comfort and mobility for all users, prioritize safety for all users and make quick and efficient improvements, and endorsed by the Transportation and Mobility Commission, the Project Staff recommends City Council endorse the final design to repurpose a travel lane in each direction on SE 34th Street to provide mobility lanes with a buffer separation, as well as install vertical barriers, high visibility crosswalks, and modular bus platforms and construct a HAWK Beacon at the intersection of SE 162nd Avenue.

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Emily Benoit, Senior Transportation Planner, Community Development, 360-487-7944,
Emily.Benoit@cityofvancouver.us

VII. Attachment(s):

- SE 34th Street Design Concept Plans (October 2022)
- SE 34th Street Traffic Analysis Methodology and Findings Memo (October 2022)
- SE 34th Street Community Engagement Touchpoint 2 Summary (October 2022)
- SE 34th Street Community Engagement Touchpoint 1 Summary (October 2022)
- SE 34th Street Council Resolution (September 2022)
- SE 34th Street Council Memo (August 2022)